



Alberta Health Services

COVID-19 Info | **Continuous masking** remains in effect at all AHS, APL and Covenant facilities provincewide.

AHS will no longer require COVID-19 immunization as condition of employment

July 18, 2022

EDMONTON – Alberta Health Services (AHS) is rescinding its Immunization of Workers for COVID-19 Policy, effective July 18, meaning AHS healthcare workers will no longer be required to be immunized for COVID-19 as a condition of employment.

In addition, our new hires and students will no longer be required to be immunized for COVID-19 upon hire or placement.

While vaccines continue to provide strong protection against serious illness, the decision to rescind the policy is the result of emerging evidence that the immunization required by the policy, which is one dose of an approved one-dose vaccine or two doses of an approved two-dose vaccine, has become less protective against infection. The COVID-19 vaccines available to date target the original strain of the virus and the virus has evolved since then.

The AHS policy came into effect at a time when Delta was the dominant variant and the immunization required by the policy was highly effective in protecting the health and safety of workers, patients and the communities that AHS serves by limiting the spread of COVID-19. Current evidence reveals that immunization without boosters has limited effectiveness in reducing transmission of the Omicron variants currently circulating.

“We continue to recommend COVID-19 immunization, including all booster doses available, to all of our healthcare workers as part of our overall approach to protect patients and one another. The safety of our patients and healthcare workers is of the utmost importance to AHS,” said Mauro Chies, Interim President and CEO, AHS.

Healthcare workers have an ethical and professional responsibility to protect others, and we know that immunization is a very effective tool to assist in meeting this standard. Booster doses enhance the effectiveness of initial doses and help protect against waning immunity.

A number of important safety measures remain in place to limit the potential transmission of COVID-19 at our AHS facilities. Our workforce continues to be required to stay home when sick, wear required personal protective equipment and practice hand hygiene.

These evidence-based measures will continue to provide effective tools against the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. We will continue to closely monitor scientific evidence to assess the need for additional measures.

“We are extremely grateful to all of those healthcare workers who are fully immunized. We would like to thank our key healthcare stakeholders, including our union partners and regulators, for their ongoing support and advocacy for immunization,” said Chies.

“The immunization policy was implemented to protect patients, healthcare workers and the public at a time during the pandemic when the immunization required by the policy was still effective in preventing transmission and when it was needed most to help contain the spread of COVID-19. This was the right policy at the time, and was based on the best evidence available to protect our staff and patients.

“Policies and procedures have had to constantly evolve during the pandemic to reflect significant changes in the virus itself and the ever-changing evidence base as we continue to protect our people and patients.”

The COVID-19 vaccine and boosters remain very important in preventing serious illness and deaths from COVID-19. We encourage healthcare workers and all Albertans to review current evidence from reputable sources to make informed decisions about getting immunized.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.